

Signalman Joseph Marcel Bodeux V-35249



Signalman Bodeux. Credit:
<http://forposterityssake.ca/>

- **Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve**
- **Born: Calgary AB, 16 December 1917**
- **Enlisted: HMCS Tecumseh, 11 December 1941**
- **Civilian Occupation: Boilermaker's helper, Canadian Pacific Railway**
- **Death: Died when HMCS Guysborough sank on 18 March 1945**
- **Commemorated: Halifax Memorial, Panel 13**

Joseph Marcel Bodeux was the eldest of four sons born to Belgian parents, Joseph L Bodeux and Mrs. Jane Bodeux (nee: Schusffleers), The family lived at 4805 MacLeod Trail, Calgary, Alberta. Joseph Marcel completed three years of high school before leaving to join the work force. He spoke English and French and had previous service with the Non-Permanent Active Militia (NPAM) in 1940 with the 23rd Field Battery of the Royal Canadian Artillery (Reserves). Prior to enlistment in the Naval Service, Joseph worked for one year as a Boilermaker's Helper with the Canadian Pacific Railway.

Joseph Marcel Bodeaux enlisted on 11 Dec 1941 at the Calgary Division RCNVR (now HMCS *Tecumseh*). Enlistment documents describe Joseph as 5' 10" tall, 169 lbs with brown hair, blue eyes and a fair complexion. He was a Roman Catholic. Ordinary Seaman Bodeux did his basic training in HMCS *Tecumseh*, followed by Navy Signals training at HMCS *St. Hyacinthe* in Quebec. While there he qualified as an Ordinary Signalman. In September 1942, he joined the newly commissioned minesweeper, HMCS *Stratford* for two months. The ship was part of the Newfoundland Force engaged in convoy escort in the North Atlantic. In late November 1942, Ordinary Signalman Bodeux was drafted to HMCS *Protector*, the navy base in Sydney, Nova Scotia. This base was the assembly point for Slow Convoy ships and their escort ships. He spent 15 months at this base receiving evaluations as "of Good Character" and "of Satisfactory Efficiency", resulting in his promotion to Signalman in July 1943. On 15 Feb 1944, Signalman Bodeux and another sailor from Calgary, Signalman Bishop left HMCS *Protector* to join the minesweeper HMCS *Guysborough*.

Signalman Bodeux served in *Guysborough* during a busy period. In March 1944, she made a dramatic rescue of a US ship during a violent Atlantic storm. The US ship had a damaged rudder, lost all communications, and had run out of fuel. The crew of HMCS *Guysborough* saw her safely into port. In June 1944, *Guysborough* was one of the famous Canadian minesweepers which cleared the way for the D-Day landings in Normandy as part of the 14th Minesweeper Flotilla.

After months of hard duty, HMCS *Guysborough* returned to Canada in December 1944 for refit in Lunenburg, NS.

Ordered back to the UK after her refit, *Guysborough* was sailing alone on 17 March 1945, in the Bay of Biscay when she was hit with an acoustic torpedo from U-868. It was early evening when she was hit, but *Guysborough* did not sink immediately. The crew manned their guns, the watertight doors were closed to reduce the spread of flood waters, and bulkheads were temporarily repaired (or shored-up) to keep the vessel from sinking. However, U-868 was still in the vicinity and she fired a second torpedo at 1935 hours which took the *Guysborough* to the bottom. Two crew members were killed instantly in the explosions, the remaining crew abandoned ship onto five Carley floats because the ship's motor cutter and the whaler were unusable. The survivors lashed four floats together and this became a temporary raft for 48 men. The fifth Carley float was overcrowded and drifted away.

Guysborough was able to send a distress signal, but it took 19 hours for the frigate, HMS *Inglis* to arrive. In total, 49 men died of injuries or from exposure - 36 on the overcrowded raft. A survivor described the scene, "Both the air and water were cold. Most of the men who died, died smiling. If they suffered any, you'd never have known it." Three of those lost were from Calgary including Signalman Bodeux. His body was never recovered, he was 27 years old.

For his Service, Signalman Joseph Marcel Bodeux was awarded 1939-45 Star, Canadian Volunteer Service Medal and Clasp, France Germany Star & Clasp & the War Medal. His mother, Jane Bodeux, was awarded the Memorial Cross. His younger brother, Louis Victor Bodeux also served in the RCNVR and survived the war.

Signalman Bodeux is remembered on the Halifax Memorial, Panel 13.

Prepared By:

Commander (Ret'd) Greg McKenzie (CO *Tecumseh* 1987-90) Citizen Sailor
Virtual Cenotaph Research Team



Sources:

- Commonwealth War Graves Commission file for Signalman Bodeux
- London Gazette 14 August 1945
- Library and Archives Canada - Service file for Signalman Bodeux
- Calgary Herald March 10, 1944
- Calgary Herald March 1945
- For Posterities Sake http://forposterityssake.ca/Navy/HMCS_GUYSBOROUGH_J52.htm
- Photo credit: <http://forposterityssake.ca/>